DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 048 JC 990 537

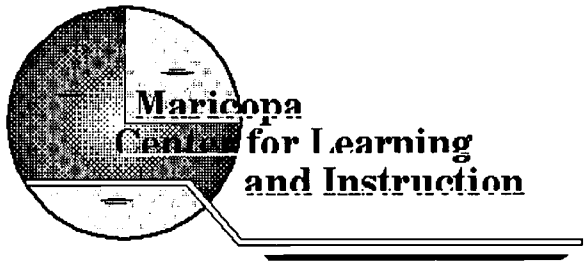
AUTHOR	Rasmussen, Geri; Skinner, Elizabeth
TITLE	Learning Communities: Getting Started.
INSTITUTION	Maricopa County Community Coll. District, Tempe, AZ. Maricopa Center for Learning and Instruction.; GateWay Community Coll., Phoenix, AZ.
PUB DATE	1997-05-00
NOTE	56p.; Some figures may not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Colleges; *Cooperative Learning; *Curriculum Design; Instructional Effectiveness; *Instructional Innovation; Integrated Curriculum; Learning Activities; Learning Strategies; Program Implementation; Teacher Effectiveness; Teaching Methods; Teaching Models; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Learning Communities

ABSTRACT

This monograph discusses learning communities in the context of community colleges, presents the challenges and benefits of learning communities, provides examples, and outlines the steps for a community college to follow in initiating a learning community. In part 1, the authors discuss the educational context in which learning communities have developed, describe the forms that learning communities most commonly take, and outline the interpersonal, administrative, and curricular challenges that learning communities create. Part 2 provides in-depth descriptions of the three learning communities the authors have developed at GateWay Community College: (1) STARS, a developmental program focused on the participants' needs for an orientation to the student role; (2) LINK, which combines a content course and two developmental skills courses; and (3) CLOUT, a freshman-year learning community of three courses that share a common skill focus, the power of language. This section of the monograph reveals the importance of planning, documentation, and analysis to a successful learning community. In part 3, the authors provide a three-phase implementation strategy for developing a successful learning community. In the appendix following this section, blank frameworks are provided to assist faculty in planning their own learning community. (VWC)

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: GETTING STARTED

Geri Rasmussen and Elizabeth Skinner
GateWay Community College
Maricopa Community Colleges



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the many individuals who contributed to the development, both technically and conceptually, of this monograph. Our work with learning communities was an outgrowth of a Maricopa County Community College District grant project. Much of our initial understanding of learning communities, including the "Cactus" framework for identifying critical design elements of a learning community, came from this project. We want to acknowledge director Barbara Shovers and coordinating members Gwen Argersinger, Lillian Barker, Connie Cagley, Laura Helminski, Sally Rings, and Nancy Siefer. This group also provided ongoing support to campuses throughout the Maricopa District in the development of learning communities. We also want to thank Suzann Shepard, Linda Sullivan, and other members of the Maricopa Ocotillo Committee on Learning Communities for their support.

We wish to thank Alan Levine, Richard Rasmussen, Bill Tse, and Tony Zeka for their technical expertise in the development of computer graphics which represent our conceptual frameworks as well as Naomi Okumura Story, Liz Warren, and especially Tina Emmons for their work in the final preparation of the monograph.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Appendix

PREFACE

A couple of years ago, I decided to team-teach with myself. I am certified in both English and Anthropology, and figured that offering Introduction to Socio-Cultural Anthropology in combination with Freshman English would be a natural. If I had had the monograph that you now hold in your hands, I'm sure that it would have been a more successful experience! I no longer offer these courses together, due to what Elizabeth Skinner and Geri Rasmussen describe as "administrative challenges", but I have been so inspired by their work that I am planning to try again. I believe this monograph will be of great relevance and assistance to anyone who is planning a learning community, as well as for those who are already involved in one.

In Part I, *An Overview of Learning Communities*, the authors discuss the educational context in which learning communities have developed, describe the forms that learning communities most commonly take, and outline the challenges and benefits of learning communities for students, faculty, and administrators.

Part II, *Examples of Three Different Types of Learning Communities*, provides in depth descriptions of the three learning communities the authors have developed at GateWay Community College. This section of the monograph reveals the importance of planning, documentation, and analysis to a successful learning community. Supplementing the text, the authors have developed a number of exceptionally helpful diagrams and tables.

In Part III, *Steps for Initiating a Learning Community*, the authors provide a three phase implementation strategy for developing a successful learning community. In the appendix following this section, blank frameworks are provided to assist faculty in planning their own learning community.

Liz Warren, Faculty
South Mountain Community College

PART I

AN OVERVIEW OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

"By stepping outside the tradition of isolated courses and imagining more interdisciplinary approaches, we may gain the flexibility we need to continue to adapt our remarkable institutions to meet the needs of our communities in the next century."

Higher education is under great pressure today to show that it is preparing students for the changing world of work and the demanding challenges of citizenship in turbulent times. In addition, there are internal pressures to make the curriculum more flexible in order to take advantage of innovations in instructional technique and technology. Finally, there is a desire to emphasize higher levels of critical thinking throughout the educational system.

As part of this recent interest in seeking innovative and flexible approaches to college instruction, Learning Communities (LC) are attracting the attention of faculty members in a wide variety of disciplines. Learning Communities are an approach to curriculum design which coordinates two or more courses into a single program of instruction, often called a learning community. Models range from clusters of loosely linked courses to single programs in which several courses have been so intertwined that course divisions are no longer apparent.

By making educational experiences more coherent and meaningful, LC fosters a greater sense of community among learners, promotes greater retention and achievement for students, and revitalizes the teaching experience for faculty members. The integrated approach is believed to be more compatible with the way people naturally learn and more relevant to the real world. Learning is raised to a higher level as students see the commonalties in thinking across several subject areas. Critical thinking is strengthened as students are exposed to multiple, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives on the same issues. When individual disciplines are seen in a broad context encompassing many aspects of human society, more ethical decisions are possible.

Learning Communities are an exciting innovation for community college instructors. By stepping outside the tradition of isolated courses and imagining more interdisciplinary approaches, we may gain the flexibility we need to continue to adapt our remarkable institutions to meet the needs of our communities in the next century.

Learning communities can be developed for a number of differing purposes. Several content courses can be combined to emphasize a common theme. A history, sociology, and psychology course, for example, could be combined to work with the theme of the "Individual in Society." One or more skills courses, such as English composition or college reading, can be combined with a content course such as freshman biology. In such a course the students do a great deal of reading and writing about the concepts they learn in biology, simultaneously improving their literacy skills and their conceptual understanding of biology. Another possibility would be to integrate several

general studies courses for students in a particular occupational program such as engineering to emphasize these students' special interests and needs.

In the Maricopa Community College District, learning communities have been started for all of these purposes and others. These learning communities have taken various forms, reflecting differing degrees and types of integration. The most common are linked activities, linked courses, and seamless courses.

LINKED ACTIVITIES

Many faculty members who become interested in LC first experiment with single activities or projects which link two courses. These experiments amount to cross-class dialogues planned by instructors teaching separate courses with different student populations. For example, a presentation of gang violence is attended by students from psychology, sociology, and economics courses. After the presentation, the students join in a discussion of the topic.

A somewhat more involved linked activity might ask students enrolled in a math course to evaluate process descriptions written by English 101 students for solving math word problems. English students discover whether their writing communicates clearly, while the math students benefit from exposure to a variety of perspectives to help them understand a math process.

Such activities are fairly easy to plan and execute, requiring little if any changes in the normal instructional and administrative procedures on the campus. Only two aspects of collaboration are required, **co-planning** by instructors teaching different courses and **co-learning**, the sharing of a learning activity by students from two or more courses. (See Figure 1.) Nonetheless, linked activities can achieve a lot in terms of building more integration within the curriculum and more camaraderie among faculty. Students begin to understand that learning goals cut across traditional course offerings.

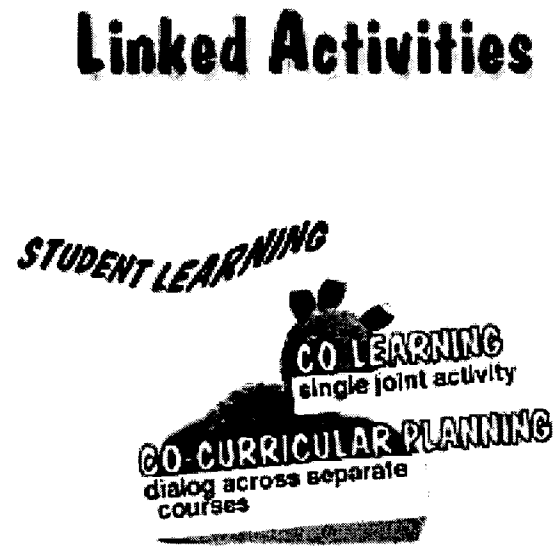


FIGURE 1

LINKED COURSES

Instructors who see many connections between two or more courses may decide to plan a semester-long coordination. This effort will involve four elements of collaboration. (See Figure 2.) Although the courses may be taught separately, every effort is made, through **co-planning** to emphasize parallels and reinforce joint concepts and skills. Students are required to **co-enroll** in all the courses included in the link. Instructors observe each other's classes and begin to experiment with the **co-teaching** of selected activities. Most

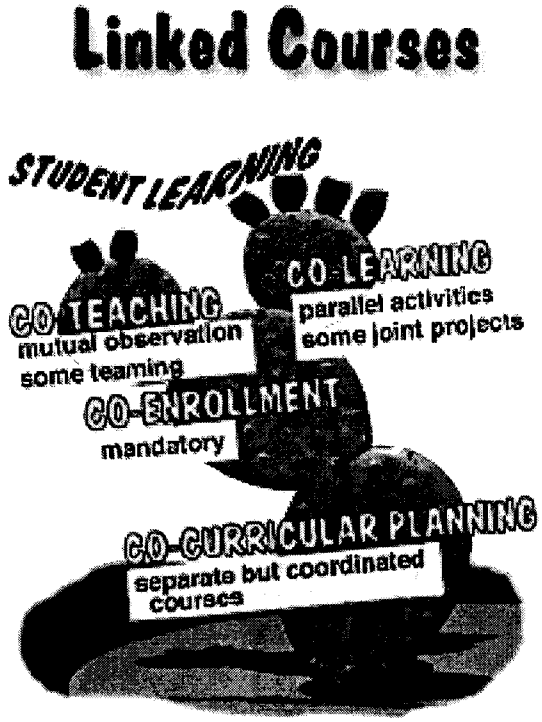


FIGURE 2

learning activities and assignments are still specific to only one of the courses in the link, but the instructors plan one or more joint projects or **co-learning** activities which involve all courses. Joint assignments, however, are still assessed separately so that separate grades can be assigned to each course.

Because students share so much together, a supportive community of learners begins to develop. Students learn by example to expect connections among the courses they take in college and begin to seek a broader framework for their education. Faculty members are enriched professionally by working so closely with other instructors.

Linked courses require more investment of faculty time in planning both before the semester begins and on an ongoing basis. It is important that faculty members' schedules allow them to attend each other's classes.

SEAMLESS COURSES

Some instructors may want to go beyond the coordination of existing courses to merge the competencies of two or more courses into a single program of instruction. Five elements of collaboration are needed for this more ambitious undertaking. (See Figure 3.) For example, students could **co-enroll** in a six credit "course" which would cover the competencies associated with first-year philosophy and biology (for record keeping purposes, students would still be technically enrolled in the two traditional courses). Students would attend a 2 1/2 hour session twice a week to participate in a program of **co-learning** activities that relate, in an integrated fashion, to the goals of the two courses. There would be no identifiable time associated with any one course because the courses have been thoroughly combined through **co-planning**. The instructors of record for the two courses would act as a **co-teaching** team and would be present throughout the session. Homework assignments and examinations would also be integrated and **co-assessed**. Individual assessments contribute to a single grade for the overall program, which would be recorded on the students' transcripts for both of the courses in which they are officially enrolled.

"Students learn by example to expect connections among the courses they take in college and begin to seek a broader framework for their education."

For some instructors, the seamless LC course reflects a broader learner centered philosophy of education which sees the learner rather than the discipline as the organizing center of learning experiences. Students become

part of the instructional team as they work with faculty members to design the semester's activities. In addition, since this philosophy also views knowledge as dynamic, the course may not be preplanned but emerges day to day as the outgrowth of the interactions of students and instructors. The role of the faculty is to document how course competencies are covered within the emerging design.

It is beneficial to experiment with one or more of these types of LCs or develop a unique version which combines qualities from more than one of these types. The best design will depend on institutional environment and the specific disciplines to be integrated as well as the characteristics of the faculty and students who will participate. The goal is to provide a richer range of learning experiences to our students and contribute to a more vibrant and supportive campus environment for students and faculty alike.

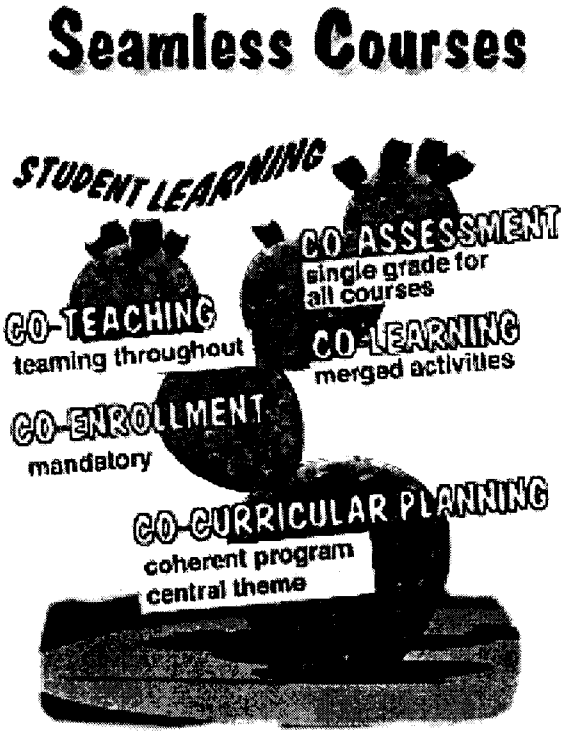


FIGURE 3

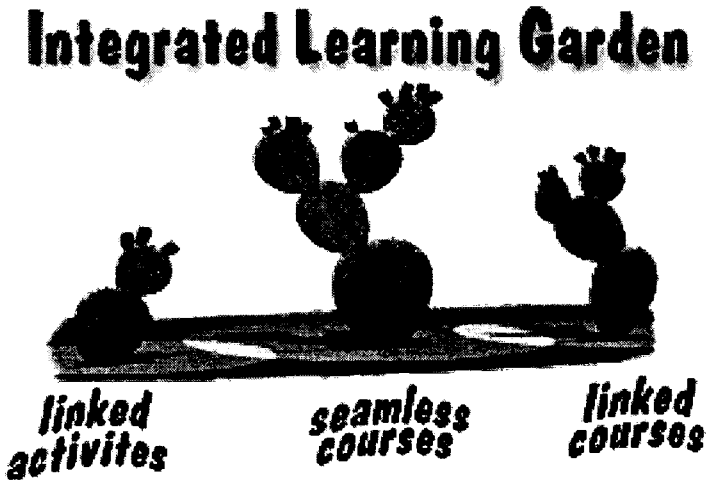


FIGURE 4

THE CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

"The goal is to provide a richer range of learning experiences..."

As with any innovation, LC presents both potential benefits and potential problems. The challenge for innovators is to take advantage of the benefits and to deal creatively with the problems. In this section, we address some of the common concerns (summarized in Table 1) expressed by faculty when they first consider LC.

INTERACTING WITH COMPLEX CONTENT

The central characteristic of LC is the new way in which students and faculty interact with the curriculum content of the two or more courses which have been integrated. But this new attempt to emphasize connections makes instruction much more complex.

BROADER SCOPE

The course contents and activities go beyond the scope of stand-alone courses. This broadening of focus can be unnerving to instructors, who may fear a loss of integrity for their own disciplines and an obscuring of the conceptual organizations which has made their disciplines so useful in their own right as a way of interpreting the world. In addition, they anticipate a slighting of the traditional content of a course in the effort to explore higher levels of learning. It is difficult to make sure that the contents of all courses are treated equally. The complex organization of the LC makes it difficult for instructors to make sure that all course objectives are being covered.

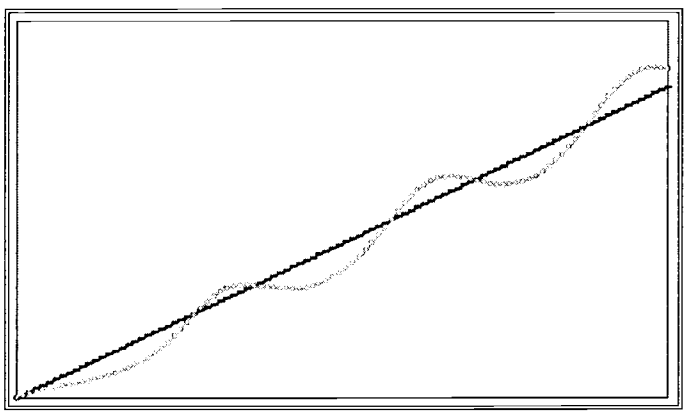


FIGURE 5: STAND ALONE COURSE VS. LEARNING COMMUNITY COURSE LEARNING CURVES

Since learning seems to occur at a different pace in LC, faculty can become very uneasy part way through a semester about whether they are "on track." Instructors of learning communities often agree that learning does not follow the same path as that found in traditional, stand-alone courses. If that learning can be said to occur in a fairly linear path, the learning in LC can better be described as a series of hills and valleys (see Figure 5). While learning does occur (many believe to a greater degree), there may be long periods of apparent stagnation and even periodic drops in student performance followed by a dramatic rise in demonstrated learning. It is during the stagnant periods that instructors become uneasy.

TABLE 1: POTENTIAL CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF THE INTEGRATED LEARNING COMMUNITY

	POTENTIAL CHALLENGES	POTENTIAL BENEFITS
ADMINISTRATIVE		
Student Centered	May require a greater commitment than a student is ready for Decreases flexibility in student schedules	Especially beneficial for at risk students/Provides an intensive, supportive learning environment/Increases completions and retention Encourages more coherent sequencing of courses in a student's program/Encourages taking core courses early in college
Instructor Centered	Difficult to compensate faculty under existing loading schemes.	
Registration Centered	Can cause scheduling conflicts for teachers, students, and rooms May be difficult to work with existing computerized systems for printed schedules and registration	
INTERACTION WITH CONTENT		
Larger Framework	Loss of integrity of individual disciplines/Difficult to assure all courses are treated equally/Difficult to assure all course objective are being met/May slight some traditional content of a course Syllabus complex, so assignment requirements may be unclear/Students may feel overloaded with assignments	Allows concepts to be covered in greater depth and with a variety of approaches and perspectives/Reinforces concepts Encourages students to see connections between courses/Increases transferability of concepts/Allows students to see key ideas repeated in courses Allows assignment coordination
Longer Time Frame	May eliminate spaced practice Fatigue factor due to prolonged sessions	Permits greater flexibility, depth, and meaningfulness Allows a greater sense of community
INTERPERSONAL		
Instructor/Student	Close connection to students can be draining/Can perceive that one instructor is being played against the other/Can perceive self as competing for students' attention	Instructors get to know students better/Allows more effective promotion of learning/Allows for increased ability to evaluate achievement Students get to know teachers better/Allows better understanding of what is expected/ Believe faculty are caring/Believe faculty offer attention and feedback/Sees communication as open/Less apprehensive to speak to instructors Students like having more than one instructor/More variety in teaching styles/More opportunity to understand concepts through multiple explanation/ Stimulates freer speech in the classroom
Student/Student	Potential for cliques to form/Cliques can be intimidating and disruptive Group members do not always contribure equally to assignments	Social support network develops/Peer teachers and coaches/Exerts positive peer pressure Increases tolerance for difference/Increases respect for individuals
Instructor/Instructor	Working together is time consuming/ Instructors may experience loss of autonomy as decisions are shared/May feel uncomfortable having another so intimately observing teaching experiences	Instructors enjoy working with another instructor/See traditional courses as isolated/ Feel revitalized/Discover new possibilities/ See subject matter in new ways/Feel more confident/Feel willing to take more risks Synergy emerges from combined thinking that none could have imagined by themselves

"Students also perceive that their interactions with instructors are more effective."

From the students perspective, the more complicated framework for LC can lead to confusion. For this reason, the syllabus is often seen as a problem by students, who may also complain that assignments are unclear. Students can easily feel overloaded. Even though they would receive the same amount of work in separate courses, the presentation of this work in complex assignments can seem more demanding. In addition, because the LC program is taught in a unified form, students may unconsciously forget they are receiving credit for more than one course and so feel the work load is excessive, comparing it to the load for an individual course.

The challenge is to develop planning tools that allow instructors to manage, monitor, and communicate the complexity of LC curriculum in an effective way. It is this very complexity that holds both the promise and the potential pitfalls of this new innovation. The difficulties can be overcome with careful planning. Our experience shows that it is possible to achieve an integration which allows concepts and skills from several courses to be combined in such a way that they are "iterated" not just repeated. They are covered in greater depth through a greater variety of approaches and perspectives.

Assignments can be coordinated into more meaningful wholes and the due dates of assignments can be sequenced in workable ways for students. Both instructors and students come to appreciate that a single assignment that serves as a learning activity for several courses is more efficient and effective than three separate assignments. The larger framework gives more meaning to course contents and increases the potential transferability of skills. Students learn to expect connections among the concepts they are learning and are prepared to see key ideas repeated in different contexts.

LONGER TIME FRAME

Whenever a longer time frame is utilized in education, problems can occur if the learning activities are not carefully planned. Boredom and fatigue can occur, especially when class time extends to three or four hours. Attention spans can flag before the session ends, making the learning in the last hour segment less than effective. The benefits of "spaced practice" can be lost. Instead of returning to the same subject in several separate sessions, students may receive "massed practice" in one long session. The challenge for instructors is to become comfortable with the longer time frame and plan for a flow of activities that can maintain a high level of motivation and involvement.

The longer time frame has a number of advantages, allowing for greater flexibility, depth, and meaningfulness. For example, a whole morning can be spent exploring a single concept in a variety of ways, working on an intensive group project, or on a field trip. One instructor can meet individually with students while another leads the whole group in a discussion. The longer time frame also allows a greater sense of community to develop among the participants simply because they spend more uninterrupted time together.

INTERPERSONAL CHALLENGES

In addition to the integration of content, LC is also unique in terms of the depth of interpersonal relationships which develop in the learning communities. A number of participants, both students and faculty, have described the communities as "family-like," experiencing both the advantages and disadvantages that label implies.

INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

When faculty first participate in an LC, they may find the intense and personal interaction with students draining. In addition, it may be a new experience for them to share their relationship to students with another instructor. They may fear that differences in teaching style and policies may be disruptive. The danger is to fall into a competition for the attention and dedication of students. In addition, students may play one instructor against another just as children do with their parents. If one instructor is strict about a due date, for example, students may appeal to another instructor.

A different problem anticipated by some LC participants was the possibility that students would be "spoiled" by the increased attention from instructors and would have difficulty transitioning to other courses. Counterbalancing this worry is the realization that students in LC communities can make dramatic gains in confidence and readiness for the traditional college curriculum. Using a family analogy, the challenge for LC communities is to develop "parenting/teaching" styles that allow the instructors to maximize student learning by working creatively together and minimize the possibility of working at cross purposes.

When thoughtfully carried out, LC allows instructors to know their students more thoroughly because they see them for a longer time in more varied contexts and because they can share their perceptions of students. This greater knowledge of students helps instructors to more effectively promote learning and to more thoroughly evaluate achievement. They also understand the cultural diversity of their students more deeply. Students also perceive that their interactions with instructors are more effective in LC. They get to know their teachers better and understand what they expect. They feel that faculty are caring and give them attention and feedback. Communication is seen as open; students are less apprehensive about speaking to instructors. They like having more than one teacher because they experience more variety in teaching styles and more opportunity to understand new concepts through multiple explanations. They enjoy seeing instructors discuss and even disagree in class; it stimulates freer speech in the classroom.

STUDENT-STUDENT INTERACTIONS

Whenever an approach to teaching fosters a great deal of student interaction, there are potential problems. When student groups become negative they can exert peer pressure to resist learning and even drop out. In addition, group members do not always contribute equally to assignments, leaving some

members with resentment. Student cliques sometimes form, especially if the students stay together through more than one semester. Such cliques can be intimidating to teachers and disruptive to the classroom atmosphere. The challenge is to foster student interaction that contributes positively to the educational goals of the community.

"Students in LC usually form strong social support networks..."

In our experience, students in LC usually form strong social support networks, helping each other with problems both within and outside the classroom. They become peer teachers or "coaches" for each other, encouraging each other to prepare and participate and helping each other understand course content.

INSTRUCTOR-INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION

Collaboration is very time consuming and demanding. The faculty members experience a loss of autonomy since day to day curriculum decisions have to be shared with others. This may result in less spontaneity on the part of individual teachers. In addition, the loss of privacy is hard to get used to at first— other teachers in your classroom: other teachers who know how you plan and how you grade and who see those bad days when things don't go as expected. For most, however, these apprehensions are replaced by a feeling of trust based on the sharing of daily ups and downs. Instructors become more confident about being observed by peers and the LC experience itself becomes a natural tool for faculty development.

Faculty consistently mention the pleasure they experienced working cooperatively with other faculty members on LC courses. They do not want to return to the isolation of more traditional classroom teaching. They feel revitalized, discover new possibilities in teaching, and see their subject matter in new ways. They feel braver, willing to take risks and more creative in their approach to instruction. A kind of synergy emerges from the combined thinking of the team teachers.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES

Because LC represents a substantial change from traditional delivery of instruction, it can cause scheduling conflicts for teachers, students, and rooms. Students have a lack of flexibility in their scheduling when they commit to a block of time for an LC program. This causes problems with other courses they wish to take, work schedules and family responsibilities. For example, LC blocks which start at 8:00 in the morning cause problems for students with young children while blocks which start later may extend into the afternoon hours and interfere with work times. Participating in an LC may represent too great a commitment for some students, especially if the LC block includes nine or more credit hours. If a student finds the load is too heavy, they risk a greater potential loss since in most cases they can not drop just one course from the LC block.

Advisors play a key role in effectively communicating the nature of LC programs to students. Existing computerized systems do not clearly accommodate LC courses when preparing on line and printed schedules. Oversight of registration is important, and mechanisms need to be developed so that students will be enrolled in all components of an LC block or not at all.

The loading of faculty who teach in an LC block is also tricky. Existing schemes for compensating faculty are not easily adapted to LC participation. In addition, when instructors are involved in blocks, it limits their availability to teach in other course sections. This is especially a problem for adjunct faculty who may risk losing other employment opportunities. The scheduling of rooms may also be a problem. Computerized systems cannot always be relied on to hold the same classroom space available for all segments of an LC block. Moreover, special arrangements of furniture conducive to the community building of LC may not be maintained when rooms are used for many purposes.

Because Learning Communities represent a structural change in the delivery of instruction, it presents challenges to the district's administrative procedures. But LC has potential benefits that are well worth the effort it may take to adapt current procedures and policies. As an alternative approach to organizing the curriculum, it helps a college serve its diverse clientele. LC seems to be especially beneficial to at-risk students, who may need a more intensive, supportive learning environment. By blocking courses which fit logically together, LC encourages more coherent sequencing of courses in a student's program of study. LC blocks which focus on core courses encourage students to take these foundation courses early in their college careers. Our data shows that LC can promote greater completion and retention for students suggesting that students may be helped to proceed through their coursework in a more efficient and effective way.

PART II

EXAMPLES OF THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEARNING COMMUNITIES

"A kind of synergy emerges from the combined thinking of the team teachers."

At GateWay Community College, we have developed three LCs, each with its own unique purpose. Each has its own framework which has evolved over time. The three now form a three semester sequence. The first is the STARS community, a developmental program focused on the participants' need for an orientation to the student role. The second is the LINK program, which combines a content course and two developmental skills courses. The third is the CLOUT community, a freshman-year learning community of three courses which share a common skill focus, the power of language.

We began our first STARS class in the spring of 1994. Currently the communities are scheduled with STARS every fall, LINK every spring, and CLOUT every fall. This allows a student to progress from one community to the next without a break in continuity. The nine credit communities meet two mornings a week from 8:30 to 12:30 in one classroom. The students receive separate grades in each of the three classes involved in the community. For each of our LC communities, both instructors were present throughout the morning sessions and were active in the classroom the majority of the time. Officially, one of us was responsible for two of the integrated courses and the other for one. Which one of us had the double load varied depending on our certifications.

TABLE 2

CONCEPTS OF INTEGRATION IN THE STARS BLOCK
(CONCEPTS APPARENT TO INSTRUCTORS PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION)

	AAA 150	ENG 061	RDG 081
READING	muscle reading creating pictures		SQ3R mapping reading ties to AAA content
NOTES	notes from books		notes from books
TESTS	test taking		test taking
THINKING	critical thinking library		critical thinking library
WRITING	prewriting revision	prewriting revision	
		journals tied to AAA concepts on reading	written answers to questions
VOCABULARY		parts of speech	parts of speech

STARS: FOCUS ON STUDENT NEEDS

The STARS community is designed to couple GWCC's lowest level of developmental coursework (ENG 061 and RDG 081) with a Success Orientation Seminar (AAA 150) course. We wanted to combine these three courses because they share the same student population—the most at-risk at our college. When compared to the rest of our student body, students in these three courses have the lowest skill level, the least familiarity with college, and the least supportive environments. We were concerned about increasing

TABLE 3

CONCEPTS OF INTEGRATION IN THE STARS BLOCK
(CONCEPTS APPARENT TO INSTRUCTORS AT MID SEMESTER)

	AAA 150	ENG 061	RDG 081
READING	muscle reading creating pictures		SQ3R mapping
		grammar	
	comprehension keywords		underlining
NOTES	notes from books		notes from books study sheets mapping
TESTS	test taking		test taking question types
THINKING	critical thinking library	critical thinking	critical thinking library
LEARNING	general to specific integrating	general to specific integrating	general to specific integrating
WRITING	prewriting revision	prewriting revision	
		journals tied to AAA concepts on reading	written answers to questions on reading
		topic sentence support	main ideas support paragraph patterns
		outlining	mapping
	speaker summary		summary
VOCABULARY		parts of speech	parts of speech
		subordination/ coordination	conjunctions as context clues
		prepositional phrase	comprehension
		spelling irregular verbs	sounding out words with phonetic symbols

"The main connection was viewed as the theme of success following from self responsibility."

the retention and academic success of these students and about accommodating the broad diversity of student backgrounds. The focus would be on motivation and strengthening the basic skills and attitudes necessary for success in college.

Since STARS was our first attempt at an LC, we structured the program as loosely linked courses. We began with some broad assumptions about our student's needs and only later began to realize the importance of having a conceptual framework. Because our primary purpose was to orient our students to the role of college student, the content of AAA 150, the Success Orientation Seminar, formed the central strand of the program coordinated with the other two courses. As the semester progressed, we discovered more connections across the three courses. Table 2 shows the parallels across courses we were able to identify prior to the beginning of the semester while Table 3 shows the overlaps recognized by mid-semester. It can be seen that the points of integration grew in two ways: more potential areas for integration were identified and more overlap was seen between reading and English. With both instructors present, they were able to recognize and document the process as more complex structures and frameworks emerged.

The main connection was viewed as the theme of success following from self responsibility. The Success Orientation Seminar course had numerous

TABLE 4: RESPONSIBILITIES

As a reader/listener it is your responsibility to . . .	As a writer/speaker it is your responsibility to . . .
1. **Identify main ideas** Identify the writer's/speaker's main ideas so that you can understand.	* Make study sheets to help you bring thoughts from memory.
2. **Organize** Organize main ideas so that you can remember them.	1. **Communicate main ideas** Offer clear main ideas so that the reader can understand.
3. **Identify the support** Identify support so you can consider the information critically.	2. **Organize** Organize the main ideas so that the reader/listener can understand/ consider them.
4. **Interpret meaning based on Standard American English.**	3. **Use support** Use support so the reader/listener can understand/consider the information.
* Make study sheets to help you remember.	4. **Use Standard American English** Use Standard American English so that the reader/listener can understand.

TABLE 5: THE METHODS CIRCLE

Identify main ideas

Underline
Key Words

Identify organization

Find paragraph pattern
Identify support
Find how support was added to organize the main ideas
Map
To do this, you must categorize the main ideas and the support. As you categorize you make it easier to remember.
Ask questions

Interpret

Interpret meaning based on Standard American English cues.

Identify main ideas

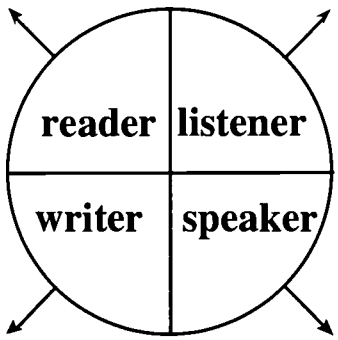
Key Words

Identify organization

Find lecture pattern
Identify support
Listen for explanation and elaboration used to clarify the main ideas.
Take notes
To do this, you must categorize the main ideas and the support. As you categorize you make it easier to remember.
Ask questions

Interpret

Interpret meaning based on Standard American English cues.



Have clear main ideas

Offer clear main ideas so the reader can understand and consider.

Use clear organization

Utilize paragraph/essay pattern so the reader can understand.

Offer support so the reader can understand.

Outline
To do this, you must categorize main ideas and support. As you plan the organization you make it easier to write.

Answer questions you may have.

Edit

Use Standard American English so the reader can understand.

Have clear main ideas

Offer clear main ideas so the reader can understand and consider.

Use clear organization

Structure speech so the listener can understand.

Offer support so the listener can understand.

Outline
To do this, you must categorize main ideas and support. As you plan the organization you make it easier to speak.

Answer questions you may have.

Self monitor

Use Standard American English so the listener can understand.

speakers from various areas of the college. As the instructors noticed this same message being repeated in various contexts and by various people, they were able to underscore the point to the students.

"...there is a greater chance of skill transfer to other college coursework."

Eventually, we began to see this responsibility theme as applying to the reading and English courses as well as to the AAA 150. Tables 4 and 5 show the frameworks which began to guide our instruction about midway through the semester. The first presents the parallel responsibilities of reader and writer, revealing that the two skills courses in STARS were indeed mirror images of each other. The second brings in the roles of speaker and listener as well as reader and writer in showing the communication methods used by successful students. The format of these diagrams—separate boxes arranged to show parallels—reflects where we were conceptually in our first attempt at LC. We still saw the courses as distinct though we were excited about making connections among them. These frameworks allowed us to build more integration in STARS activities.

CLOUT: COMMON SKILLS FOCUS

Our next LC effort had a very different starting point. While STARS had begun with a desire to meet the needs of a unique group of students, CLOUT arose from a more intellectual interest in course content. We had been aware for some time of an overlap in the skills taught in three of our freshman level courses—Introduction to Human Communication (COM 100), Critical and Evaluative Reading (CRE 101), and First Year Composition (ENG 101). Students who happened to be taking two of these courses at the same time had often commented on the similarities they noticed. Sometimes they found the parallels helpful, but sometimes they became confused if similar concepts were discussed with varying terminology or, vise versa, if the same terms were used for different concepts.

Therefore, the primary goal of the CLOUT program was to increase learning by reinforcing commonalties in the speaking, reading, writing processes and to encourage a level of critical thinking and skill acquisition which would surpass that of a student taking each of the three courses independently.

We pushed for more seamless integration of content in CLOUT for two reasons. First, our purpose was different. We started with an interest in content; we wanted to explore the relationships among the courses themselves, not just use the courses together to serve a common student population. Second, because we had some experience with LC behind us, we were more comfortable with changing our usual ways of ordering our instruction. We were more confident that we could accomplish all our course objectives within an integrated format.

We began the semester with a simple three column list identifying the interrelationships between reading, English and communication (Table 6). We planned the syllabus to include daily lesson plans and assignments which were topic driven rather than course driven. As we planned, we listed the

key skills and topics from all three courses on small pieces of paper and arranged them in an order that made overall sense in one coherent outline. Consequently, on any given day, time was not equally divided among each of three "courses" but was devoted to the next logical topic whether it related to one, two, or all three of the courses. For example, an entire four-hour session was spent on small group communication, which related primarily to a communication course competency but which was needed to facilitate classroom activities for the program as a whole. Another session was spent on understanding causal thinking, a common course competency for both English and reading. Effort was made throughout the semester to identify and discuss complementary and parallel themes across the three courses.

The CLOUT framework that emerged during the semester was in the form of a Venn diagram because we wanted to represent the overlaps we saw across the three courses. Figure 6 shows that early in the semester, key concepts of language were presented that related to all three courses. By mid-semester, we focused on overlaps which involved two of the courses at a time. Essay interpretation was an overlap between reading and English, public speech writing was emphasized in both communication and English, and small group theory represented an overlap in communication and reading (because of group discussions of reading materials).

Toward the end of the semester, we entered a phase of CLOUT represented by the non-overlapping arms of the Venn diagram. We emphasized skills more particularly associated with each separate course — evaluating essays in the reading course, writing of argumentative and comparative essays in English, and formal speech presentation in communication. The three course components of CLOUT might have pulled apart at this point were it not for a service learning project which served as a unifying force. The service learning project was related to the CLOUT theme—the power that derives from having strong communication skills. The goal of our service project was to convince children at a local middle school to stay in school to develop their language skills. Our students worked in groups of four to six members to design activities for the children. Students identified a social issue that emerged from their experience and pursued this issue through a number of reading, writing, and speaking assignments as shown in Table 7.

The Venn diagram in Figure 6 helped us to understand an interesting pattern we observed in student learning. Students performed in the outer areas of the diagram (essay critiquing and writing and speech presentation) about as well as students from traditional classes. They excelled, however, in the usually troublesome areas of essay interpretation, small group practice, and public speech writing. The above average sophistication shown in these skills probably resulted because they represent overlaps between two courses. Extra time and effort was, therefore, spent on these skills, and they were reinforced from several perspectives. By constructing Venn diagrams such as the one we used in CLOUT, instructors can proactively build LCs which provide overlaps in those skills which are most vital to their programs and their students.

TABLE 6: AREAS OF CONCEPT INTEGRATION IN CLOUT

COM	GENERAL CONCEPTS CRE	ENG
Intentional and unintentional messages	Reading between the lines	
Feedback or environmental cues	Lack of feedback makes reading difficult	
Transactional (at best)	Linear	Transactional (at best)
Empathy	Approaching the reading in an open manner; not allowing emotion to block thinking; metacognition; secondary ignorance	Audience
Non verbal communication and paralanguage	Tone	Tone

COM	PERCEPTION CRE	ENG
Selective perception and perceptual set	Problems with observational evidence	
	Emancipatory learning	
Proximity	Idea and correlation in discussions of cause and effect	Organization of cause and effect
Enlarging and simplifying	Propaganda technique	
Ethnocentrism	Ethnocentrism	
Stereotyping	Emotion interferes with critical reading; individual perceptions affect the understanding of a passage if attention is not paid to reading	Clearly stating your point so the reader can separate your point from his own reaction to your point

COM	LANGUAGE CRE	ENG
Connotative language and misunderstanding	Connotative language	Definition
(Lack of) concrete or specific language; connotative words	Eupemisms and loaded labels	Inability to get point across
Misunderstandings result when using abstract language	Vagueness	Misunderstandings which result when using abstract language
	Ability to understand more universal concepts by understanding abstract language	Raising level from personal to universal
Using informative and persuasive speech	Understanding informative and persuasive language	Using informative and persuasive language

COM	ARGUMENT CRE	ENG
Persuasive speech	Understanding the position of the opponent	Refuting the position of the opponent

COM	THINKING CRE	ENG
Detail (credentials and use of valid facts)	Critical thinking	Detail (credentials and use of valid facts)
Self concept	Dialectic thinking	Writing should be based on experience and the relation of detail to larger truths
	Make a decsion	Argument--need to recognize the best points of the opposition (for the purpose of refutation)

FIGURE 6: GWCC CLOUT INTEGRATION

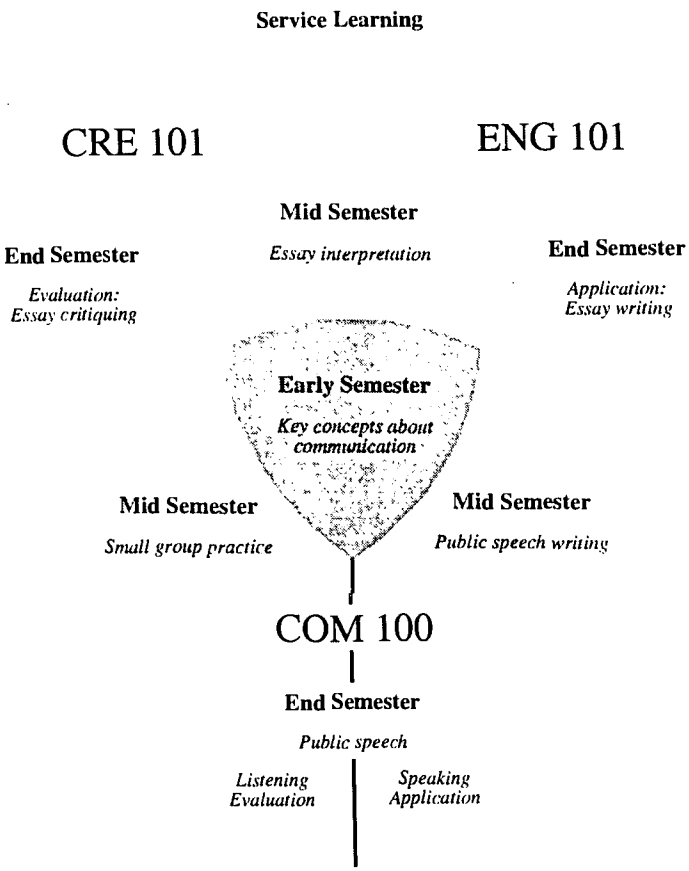


TABLE 7

INTEGRATED ASSIGNMENTS IN CLOUT

EMERGING ISSUE ASSIGNMENTS
Students researched the issue they identified in their service learning project and used their research to produce several products:

COM Information speech (15% of course grade)
Persuasive speech (20% of course grade)
ENG Argument paper (15% of course grade)
CRE Reading project (20% of course grade)

SMALL GROUP COMPONENT ASSIGNMENTS
Students fulfilled the majority of the small group communication component and summarized their experience orally and in written form:

COM Service learning group report (10% of course grade)
Group presentation (10% of course grade)

REFLECTIVE ASSIGNMENTS
Student reflected individually and in groups about their experience:

ENG Reflective essay (10% of course grade)
COM Group presentation (same as that listed above)
Group analysis (10% of course grade)

"Students performed best on those skills which were most practiced across the three courses, in particular, interpretation, analysis and synthesis of information."

LINK: TEACHING SKILLS WITHIN A CONTENT COURSE

The third LC we undertook was the LINK community, which actually represents the instructional level between our STARS and CLOUT programs. LINK had its own unique purpose. For some time, we had been aware of inherent weaknesses in our course offerings which LC seemed ideally suited to address. Skills courses such as developmental reading and writing were less than effective because they lacked a real-life context in which students could practice the skills they were learning. On the other hand, our introductory content courses seemed to be failing some students because they lacked the reading and writing skills to master the learning required.

By combining skills classes with a content class in an LC, we hoped that these complementary problems could simultaneously be ameliorated. As our first effort in this direction, we considered two developmental courses (ENG 071 and RDG 091) typically taken by students (who test into them) the semester before they enroll in 100 level content courses. These would also be the next courses taken by students completing our STARS program. In LINK, ENG 071 and RDG 091 were combined with one of the most popular freshman courses—Psychology 101. Because students entering the LINK program scored into both the ENG 071 and the RDG 091 level on the college assessment test, they had a lower average skill level than those typically found in an introductory psychology course, but as anticipated, the added support provided in LINK compensated for this potential problem.

The planning tools which emerged to guide LINK reflect its purpose. Figure 7 shows how the strengths of the skills courses address the weaknesses of the psychology course and vise versa. As the students learn psychology, they are simultaneously developing their reading and writing skills. Because they learn these skills in a more motivating and meaningful context, there is a greater chance of skill transfer to other college coursework. The psychology content, in turn, is more effectively mastered because it is learned through extensive guided reading and writing. The intent is to provide the support and basic skills instruction needed by the developmental student while preparing the student to assume the personal responsibility needed at the college level. Figure 8 shows the conceptual model which emerged for LINK. Its triangular shape is different from the rectangular model for STARS or the Venn model for CLOUT. It reflects a more thoroughly integrated approach. The two skills courses at the bottom of the triangle are both related to the single content course, psychology, at the top. In addition, relationships are drawn between the skills courses across the bottom, although this coordination was not the primary focus of LINK.

Care was taken to ensure that by the end of the semester all competencies from all three courses were covered. Reading skills were practiced in the psychology text, and students wrote paragraphs and essays to answer psychology-related questions using specific rhetorical modes from their English course such as comparison-contrast or description. The only area covered independently from psychology was the grammar component. Even

this, however, was reinforced in relationship to psychology as students revised their psychology-related paragraphs and essays.

One of the most successful learning activities in LINK involved short stories dealing with themes under discussion in psychology. Students discussed and wrote reflection essays on the relationship of the story to psychology. The stories and corresponding psychology units are shown in Table 8.

LINK was the most intricately integrated of the three LC communities we have developed both because it was the last to be developed and because its purpose lent itself to more thorough integration. Even so, the instructors did not anticipate all the points of integration which emerged as the semester progressed. Table 9 shows one of the planning tools they used to track areas of accomplishment and potential integration. Students performed best on those skills which were most practiced across the three courses, in particular, interpretation, analysis and synthesis of information. Because this framework emerged during the course of the first experience teaching LINK, the teachers can use this framework in future sections to build on more integration of assignments.

FRAMEWORK FOR A LEARNING COMMUNITY SEQUENCE

During the semester in which we initiated LINK, we began to see our pilot programs (STARS, LINK, and CLOUT) as a three-part Learning Community. In the past the district has noted that students do not translate skills learned in developmental education courses to a successful mastery of college level courses. The reason (and perhaps the rough beginning of a possible solution) began to come clear. Developmental education students are often viewed as needing more nurturing, support, guidance and structure than are college level students. College level students are given more responsibility for time management than are developmental education students; figure 9 shows this sharp contrast in expectations. Students doing well in developmental environments often failed to transfer their reading and writing skills to the more difficult college level curriculum. After teaching the three learning communities, we more clearly saw our role in preparing the developmental education student for college level. Because we had, in LINK, been teaching a fairly difficult content course (PSY 101) to a group of students scoring into both developmental reading and English, we realized that it is this upper developmental level which bears most of the weight of the transition. Figure 6 shows this transition. Once we were able to "see" this framework we used it as a guide for our instructional strategies and explained it to students as a motivational tool.

FIGURE 7

LINK

COMPLEMENTARY RELATIONSHIPS
CONTENT AND SKILLS COURSES

Clear boxes show weaknesses for students in courses
Shaded boxes show strengths for students in courses

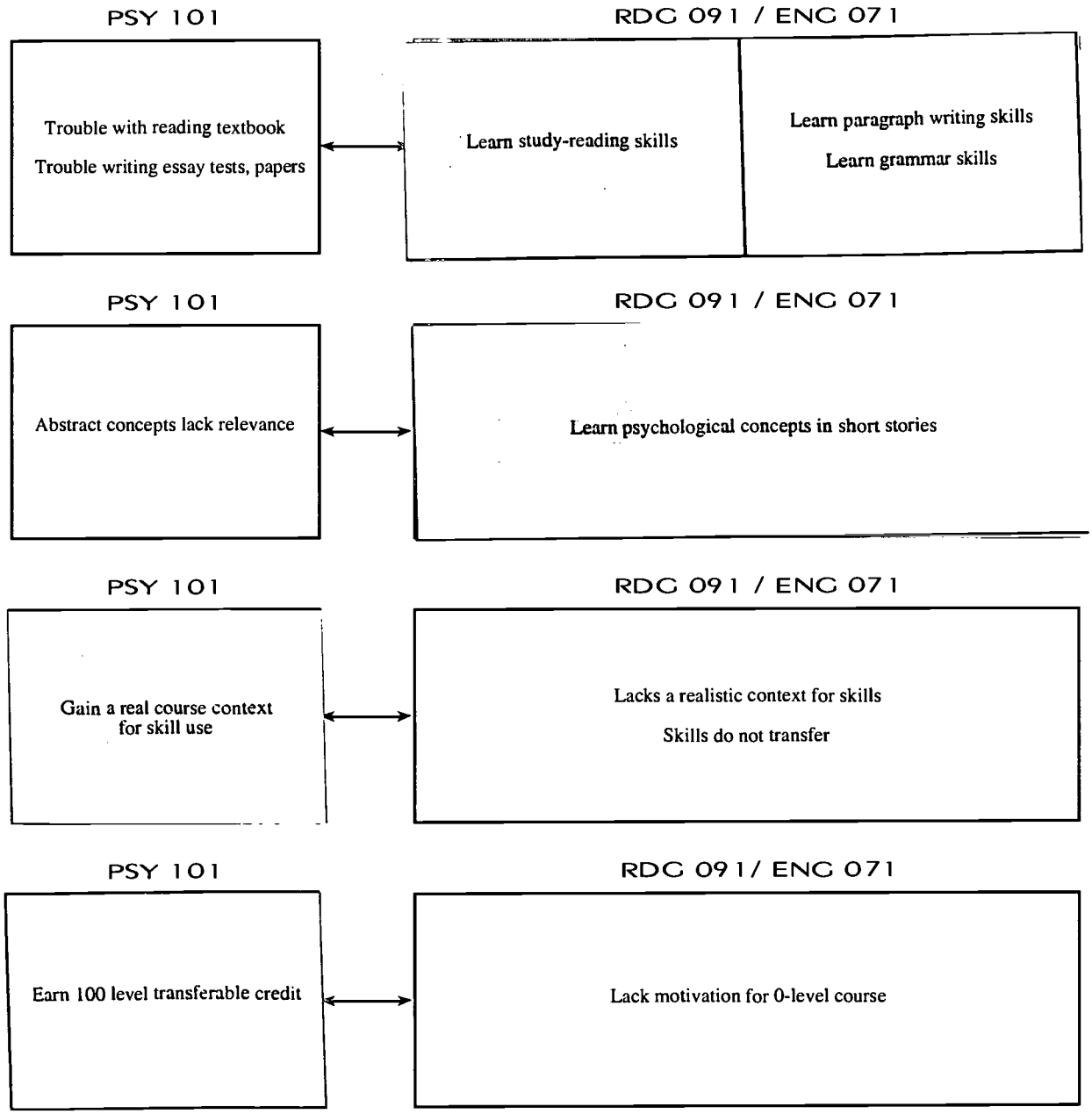


FIGURE 8

LINK

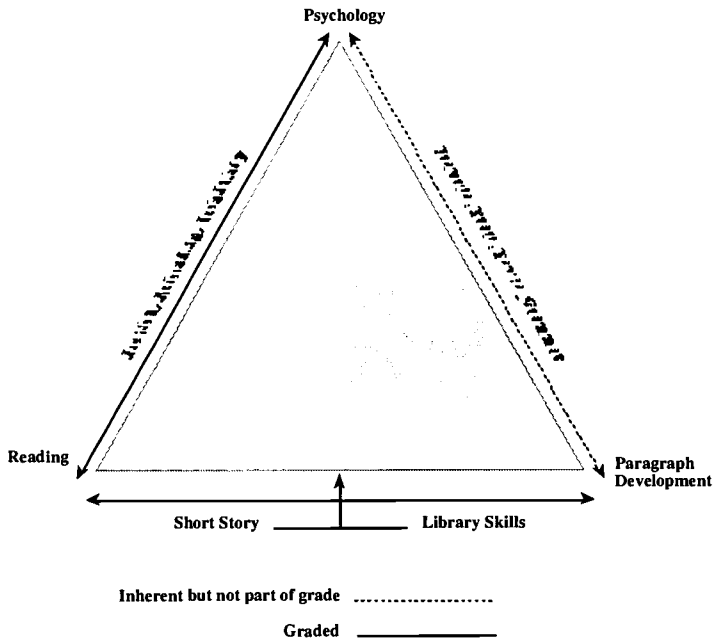


TABLE 8

SHORT STORIES AND PSYCHOLOGY UNITS INTEGRATION

"The Tell-Tale Heart" Edgar Allen Poe	The Nervous System and Behavior
"Cathedral" Raymond Carver	Sensation and Perception
"The Lesson" Toni Cade Bambara	Learning
"The Jilting of Granny Witherall" Katherine Anne Porter	Types of Consciousness
"The Watch" Elie Wiesel	Memory
"A & P" John Updike	Developmental Psychology
"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" James Thurber	The Psychological Disorders

TABLE 9

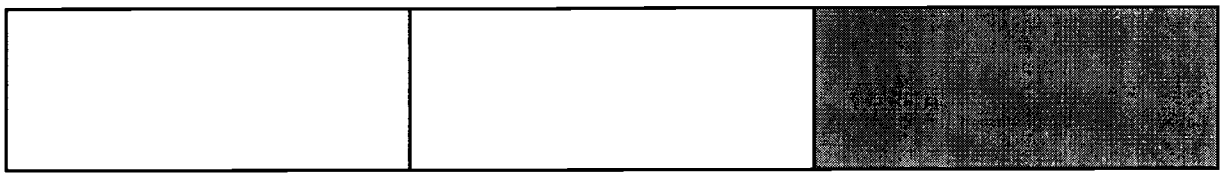
TYPICAL ASSIGNMENT MATRIX FOR INTEGRATION IN THE GWCC LINK LEARNING COMMUNITY

	PSY 101	RDG 091	ENG 071
Read Psychology Test	SI	SI	
Answer Study Guide Questions	GA	GA	SI
Paragraph Development Lessons/Exercises	SI	SI	GA
Grammar Lessons/Exercises		SI	GA
Read Short Story	SI	SI	SI
In Class Discussion	SI	SI	SI
Writing the Reflection	GA	GA	GA
Test on Psychology Text	GA	GA	GA

GA = Graded Assignment
SI = Skill Involved

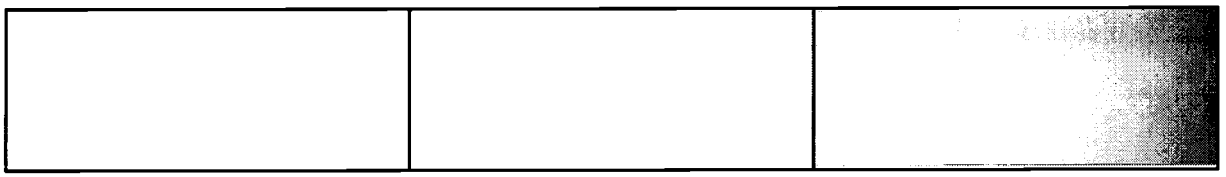
FIGURE 9

Traditional Pattern of Development to College Level Transition

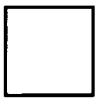


Lowest Level Developmental Courses | Highest Level Developmental Courses | College Level Courses

Transition Emerging When a 100 Level Course is in Place as Part of a Developmental Education Learning Community



Lowest Level Developmental Courses | Highest Level Developmental Courses | College Level Courses



Student receives:
- nurturing
- support
- structure
- guidance

Student is responsible for:
- time management
- independent study
- independent preparation
- self motivation

PART III

STEPS FOR INITIATING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

"Advisors and counselors will play a central role..."

While every learning community will be unique, there are some typical steps that most instructors will find useful in working through the initial planning and implementation phases.

PHASE ONE: PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

IDENTIFYING A NEED FOR LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The first step in initiating a learning community is to identify potential areas for integration in your curriculum. Evidence of such potentials can come from a number of sources. Students may comment on the helpful overlaps or troublesome confusions they find among their courses. Faculty may identify weaknesses in their own courses and look for complementary strengths in other courses in the curriculum. Faculty and administrators may share a concern for a particular population of students in the college, who may have special curriculum needs. When the opportunity for integration is documented, faculty members responsible for the relevant courses can begin a dialogue, exploring the interrelationships among their courses. Even this first step can bring a renewed sense of community to the faculty members involved.

TRYING SMALL-SCALE LINKED COURSE ACTIVITIES

If instructors want to do more to develop the interrelationships among their courses, they can plan activities which will be shared by students from two or more courses. These activities could include, for example, joint discussion of themes which cut across their courses, reactions by one class of students to works produced by another, joint service learning projects, or field trips. Such activities, even if they are brief, one-time events, allow the faculty to experience more directly the overlaps in their courses. The barriers between isolated courses begin to break down for students, too, as they see the connection between the course they are currently enrolled in and others.

After experimenting with linked activities, instructors may begin to wonder how much more effective they could be if they developed a linked course program of courses. This would allow them to co-enroll students and to build course parallels into the entire semester's activities.

DETERMINING THE FEASIBILITY OF LINKED COURSES

There are several questions which need to be answered before undertaking the more ambitious task of linking entire courses. First, will instructors have the time and flexibility in their own schedules to plan and carry out such a task? Especially in a small college, it may be difficult to cover all course

offerings if some instructors are committed to learning communities. Second, will students enroll in the linked courses? Will they feel it restricts their schedules? Will they want to enroll in the number of hours your learning community entails? If learning communities are a new idea on your campus, will students understand what it is all about?

To answer these questions, discussions should be held with college administrators (especially the department chair and dean of instruction) and with advisors and counselors. A brief presentation can be made defining linked courses and outlining the potential benefits of the new approach. When their input is actively sought in this way, administrators and staff can offer invaluable insights about the logistics of accomplishing the goal of integration. In the discussions, the following questions should be raised: (1) Can instructors involved in piloting the new innovation receive planning time and/or reassigned time? (2) How large is the pool of potential students? (3) How many courses can reasonably be linked? (4) What is the most appropriate scheduling of courses? (5) How should the new offering be presented in the printed course schedule and in the computerized course listings? Advisors and counselors will play a central role in explaining and recommending the linked program, so ongoing communication with them is vital.

PREPLANNING A LINKED-COURSE PROGRAM

When the feasibility of a linked-course program has been established, instructors should meet the semester before implementation to plan. The first step in this planning process would be to exchange syllabi so each person can look for correspondences in course competencies and course activities. Then instructors can meet in an informal session during which they "walk" the other instructors through their course, explaining in-class activities and assignments and sharing personal reflections about the joys and problems of their courses. The course parallels which are identified through this sharing activity can be listed in a simple table (See Tables 2 and 6).

This table can lead to the development of a linked calendar with columns for each course and rows for each day of the class session. This calendar will allow instructors to schedule activities in each course to take advantage of the connections across courses while maintaining their autonomy. At the same time, it allows the possibility of planning one or more joint activities for their students. The linked calendar represents the instructors' best thinking prior to the implementation of the linked program. Instructors will find, however, that they still have much to learn; many more insights will emerge and unforeseen problems will have to be solved.

PHASE TWO: IMPLEMENTATION

OBSERVING IN LINKED COURSES

When the linked courses are implemented, instructors should plan to attend the sessions of all courses daily, especially the first time a faculty member is involved, or the first time a particular set of classes are integrated. It is during the observing

"We heard comments such as, 'this is what true learning is all about'"

of the other instructor's presentation that one is most likely to identify both global and specific areas of integration. Assignments may be spontaneously adapted to take advantage of these insights. Similarly, conceptual frameworks may become apparent while observing the community. While one instructor listens to other instructors interact with the students, s/he can focus on the global design of the course—often resulting in "ah ha" experiences which constitute the basis of the community framework.

KEEPING A DAILY LOG

It is beneficial to keep a daily log—especially the first time that a learning community is offered. An informal log might include:

- daily entries describing scheduled activities
- daily events actually taking place
- daily reflections with suggestions
- periodic reflections on the progression of the community
- periodic discussions of any problem areas or areas of strength
- framework diagrams
- classroom research summaries
- student handouts designed for the community (due dates, mutual assignments, etc.)
- flyers designed for the community (schedule graphics, advertising flyers, etc.).

Although informal, this log provides a source of reference both during the semester and in future semesters; it aids in identifying connections and in developing them into frameworks. It also supplies the majority of information for a final report.

CONDUCTING CLASSROOM RESEARCH

Including classroom research allows instructors to monitor how the course is progressing. They can regularly ask the students for brief oral or written responses to questions such as: "Where do you see the courses overlapping?" "What are you most comfortable with in the community?" "What is making you uncomfortable in the community?" In our first STARS program, for example, we found that the students were confused over assignment due dates because of the complexity of the interrelated syllabi. During the semester, we explored a number of strategies to help students overcome this confusion. In the more seamless CLOUT program, we were excited when students reported that they could not differentiate between courses. While this was viewed by us as a success, we learned that students need to feel some sense of control, so we began to periodically identify the content area under focus.

Through the use of classroom research in our LINK learning community, we became aware of a need for greater flexibility. The students' comfort level with various aspects of course content varied. Early in the semester, our developmental students were intimidated by the psychology content and much class time was spent going over basic concepts and helping students deal with the textbook. As students gained confidence in their ability to handle

college level material, they expressed greater anxiety over writing; we thus spent more class time on writing skills.

INVITING GUEST OBSERVERS

Inviting key personnel to observe and/or participate in the community results in better understanding of the purpose, dynamics, and benefits of the community. This, in turn, results in increased support. For example, our college president, dean, associate dean, and division chair have all attended our classes. As a result, we have had tremendous support from administration. We heard comments such as, "this is what true learning is all about" and "I never really understood exactly what you were doing before coming to the class." Guests should also include advisors and counselors since their support is essential in identifying the type of students who would most benefit from the community.

ASSESSING STUDENT OUTCOMES

An LC provides an environment which lends itself to comprehensive student outcome assessment. Because an extended period of time is available, new approaches can be explored which might be less feasible in a stand alone course. We used some traditional and some new (to us) assessment tools in our communities including:

- pre/post assessment
  - diagnostic essays
  - skill testing
  - surveys of competency mastery and goal achievement
- student anthology publication
- course evaluations
- classroom research
- collaborative and individual activities to apply skills and to assess areas of need
- student focus groups with outside moderator
- faculty interview with outside interviewer
- Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) — based on Perry's scheme of cognitive development, uses essays rated by test-maker
- computerized diagnostics and tutorials

PHASE THREE: CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT

After a linked course program has been implemented and evaluated, faculty members will want to use their experience to more fully develop the integration potential of their learning community. They may want to change instructional strategies within the current linked format or they may want to be more ambitious in moving toward a seamless course.

The more integrated a learning community becomes, the more important is the need for a framework. A framework can be used to describe the structure

for the community and to monitor the progression of the course. It will take different forms because of the different focus and design of each community. Examples of various blank frameworks can be found in the appendix.

"A strong framework...can hold the courses together..."

When a linked course model is used, or when you begin any block community, a simple table format, in which the courses are kept fairly separate, is useful (see examples of our tables for STARS and Clout). As courses become more closely linked, and major assignments coordinated around a common theme, a Venn diagram may become useful as a way of depicting areas of planned overlap and reinforcement as well as identifying the areas to be kept separate (see example of CLOUT).

As the learning communities becomes more seamless, other creative frameworks can be developed, depending on the nature of the relationships among the integrated courses. Seamless integration requires that the learning objectives and underlying concepts of several courses be loosened from the disciplinary frameworks that usually order them. The resulting collection of ideas and objectives can be unwieldy until they are synthesized within new frameworks that are complex and abstract enough to encompass them all. Without such "roadmaps" to guide them, the instructors (and students) quickly lose their way as the semester progresses; they become overwhelmed and confused. It is harder to evaluate how the course is going—harder to know if you are on schedule. Without a "super" framework to bind the LC courses together, the instructors may revert to more familiar ways of ordering their courses. This will weaken the integration of the community, and the courses may pull apart from each other. A strong framework, on the other hand, can hold the courses together and become the basis for producing a single syllabus for a seamless course.

As the development process continues, it may also be important to expand the integration by involving other faculty members or other courses. Because the entire dynamics of the learning community will be affected, the cycle of curriculum development must be reentered whenever changes of staff or content are contemplated. It will be important to begin again to determine feasibility, pre-plan courses, implement, and ensure ongoing discovery of integration. Frameworks must also be revised or reinvented to capture the realities of the learning communities which are created.

For example, the Venn diagram used to depict our Clout program as it was originally taught had to be revised to depict Clout taught by other instructors. When another English instructor focused less on interpreting and deconstructing essays, and a reading instructor focused more on lecture and library research, the framework for the course changed as well. Because this was anticipated, instructors met prior to the beginning of the semester to pre-plan and attended all classes throughout the semester to identify points of integration. While time consuming, this process of continuing development ensures a dynamic and flexible LC which maintains relevance.

The appendix contains blank frameworks that you may wish to use in developing your own LC. Each blank is coupled with an example of the way we used the framework at GWCC.

APPENDIX

EXAMPLES OF PLANNING DOCUMENTS

LEARNING COMMUNITY PLANNING GUIDE

1. **Identify Courses to be Integrated**

2. **Identify Faculty to be Involved**

3. **Describe Characteristics of Student Population**

4. **Specify Reason for Integration**

5. **Select Type of Integration**
   - Linked activities
   - Linked courses
   - Seamless courses
   - Other (specify)

6. **Consider Co-Enrollment**
   Will co-enrollment be required?
   Will all students or will only a subset of students co-enroll?

7. **Plan Co-Teaching**
   Will instructors be available during all course times?
   Will instructors observe each other's classes?
   Will there be team teaching?

8. **Design Co-Learning**
   Will there be one or more joint learning activities?
   When will these activities occur?

9. **Plan Co-Assessment**
   Will assignments be separately graded for each course?
   Will there be common assessment but different weighting of grades for each course?
   Will a single grade be used for all courses?

10. **Chart Parallels Across Courses to be Integrated**

Course:	**Course:**	**Course:**

11. **Begin to Develop a Framework for your Integration**
    What will be the major unifying force?
    a. parallel concepts -- table or chart
    b. overlapping concepts -- venn diagram
    c. content course with skill courses -- triangle
    d. common project -- flowchart or diagram
    e. common theme -- ??

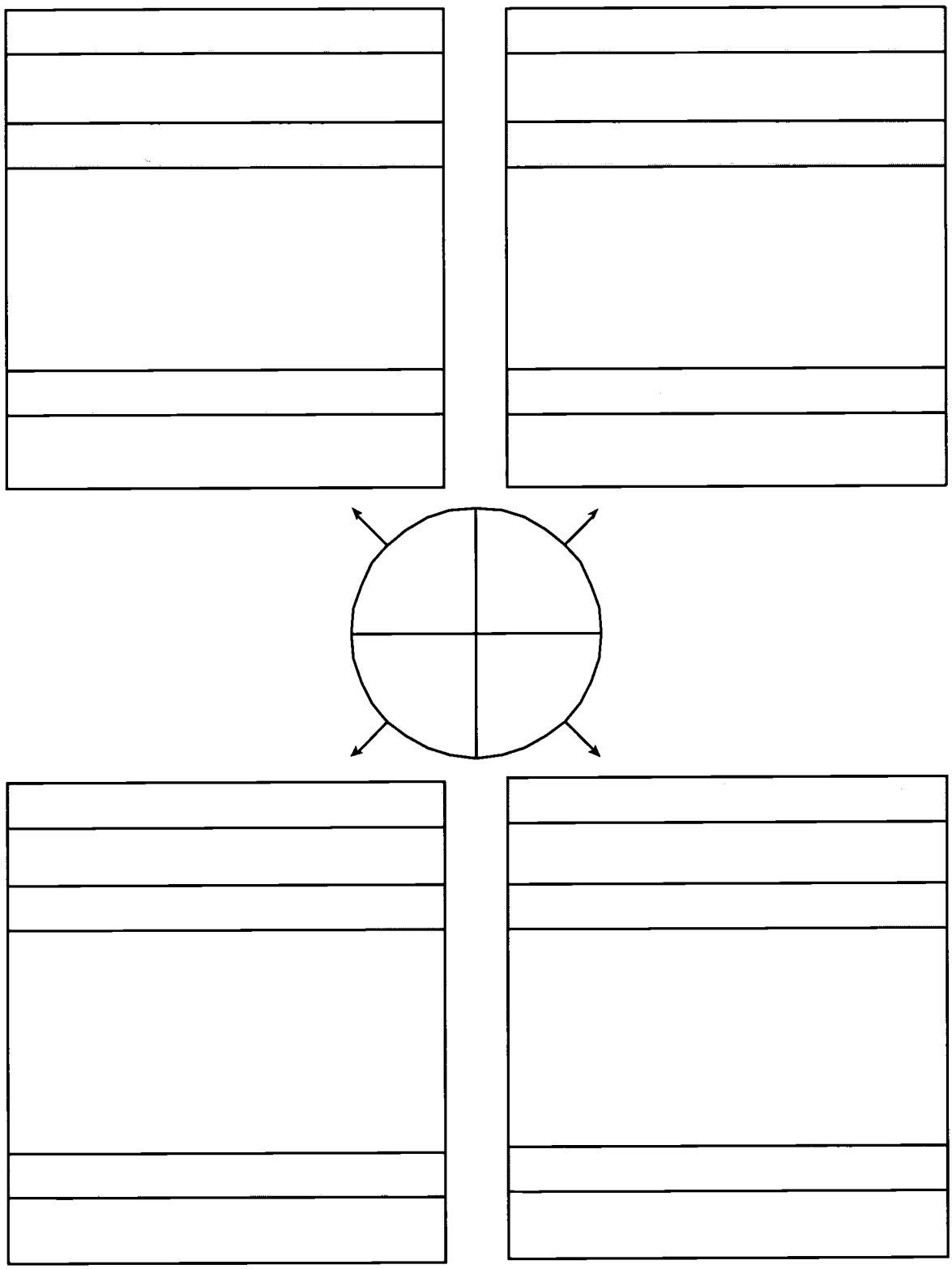
IDENTIFYING PARALLEL CONCEPTS OF INTEGRATION

	Course A	Course B	Course C
Concept 1			
Concept 2			
Concept 3			
Concept 4			
Concept 5			
Concept 6			
Concept 7			
Concept 8			

CONCEPTS OF INTEGRATION IN THE STARS BLOCK
(CONCEPTS APPARENT TO INSTRUCTORS AT MID SEMESTER)

	AAA 150	ENG 061	RDG 081
READING	muscle reading creating pictures		SQ3R mapping
		grammar	
	comprehension keywords		underlining
NOTES	notes from books		notes from books study sheets mapping
TESTS	test taking		test taking question types
THINKING	critical thinking library	critical thinking	critical thinking library
LEARNING	general to specific integrating	general to specific integrating	general to specific integrating
WRITING	prewriting revision	prewriting revision	
		journals tied to AAA concepts on reading	written answers to questions on reading
		topic sentence support	main ideas support paragraph patterns
		outlining	mapping
	speaker summary		summary
VOCABULARY		parts of speech	parts of speech
		subordination/ coordination	conjunctions as context clues
		prepositional phrase	comprehension
		spelling irregular verbs	sounding out words with phonetic symbols

DESCRIBING COMMONALITIES IN LINKED COURSES



THE METHODS CIRCLE

Identify main ideas

Underline
Key Words

Identify organization

Find paragraph pattern
Identify support
Find how support was added to organize the main ideas
Map
To do this, you must categorize the main ideas and the support. As you categorize you make it easier to remember.
Ask questions

Interpret

Interpret meaning based on Standard American English cues.

Identify main ideas

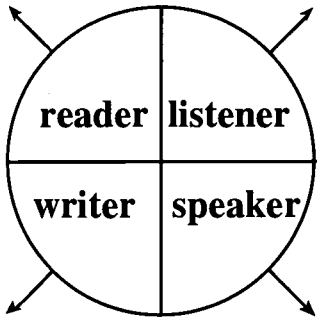
Key Words

Identify organization

Find lecture pattern
Identify support
Listen for explanation and elaboration used to clarify the main ideas.
Take notes
To do this, you must categorize the main ideas and the support. As you categorize you make it easier to remember.
Ask questions

Interpret

Interpret meaning based on Standard American English cues.



Have clear main ideas

Offer clear main ideas so the reader can understand and consider.

Use clear organization

Utilize paragraph/essay pattern so the reader can understand.

Offer support so the reader can understand.

Outline
To do this, you must categorize main ideas and support. As you plan the organization you make it easier to write.

Answer questions you may have.

Edit

Use Standard American English so the reader can understand.

Have clear main ideas

Offer clear main ideas so the reader can understand and consider.

Use clear organization

Structure speech so the listener can understand.

Offer support so the listener can understand.

Outline
To do this, you must categorize main ideas and support. As you plan the organization you make it easier to speak.

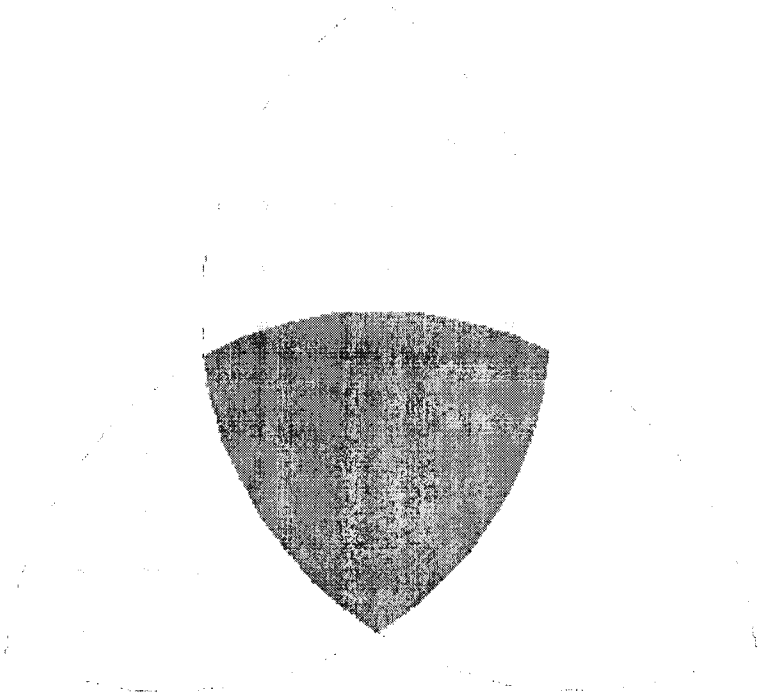
Answer questions you may have.

Self monitor

Use Standard American English so the listener can understand.

INTEGRATING COURSES AROUND A CENTRAL THEME

Central Theme



GWCC CLOUT INTEGRATION

Service Learning

CRE 101 ENG 101

Mid Semester

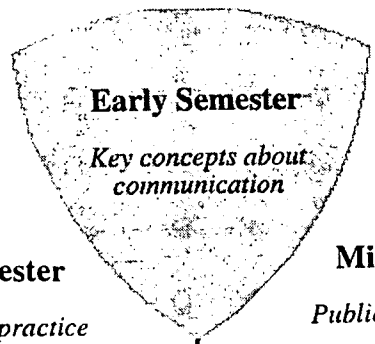
Essay interpretation

End Semester

Evaluation:
Essay critiquing

End Semester

Application:
Essay writing



Mid Semester

Small group practice

Mid Semester

Public speech writing

COM 100

End Semester

Public speech

Listening
Evaluation

Speaking
Application

MONITORING PROGRESS IN INTEGRATION WITH AN ASSIGNMENT MATRIX

	COURSE A	COURSE B	COURSE C
Assignment 1			
Assignment 2			
Assignment 3			
Assignment 4			
Assignment 5			
Assignment 6			
Assignment 7			
Assignment 8			

GA = Graded Assignment
SI = Skill Involved

TYPICAL ASSIGNMENT MATRIX FOR INTEGRATION IN THE GWCC LINK LEARNING COMMUNITY

	PSY 101	RDG 091	ENG 071
Read Psychology Test	SI	SI	
Answer Study Guide Questions	GA	GA	SI
Paragraph Development Lessons/Exercises	SI	SI	GA
Grammar Lessons/Exercises		SI	GA
Read Short Story	SI	SI	SI
In Class Discussion	SI	SI	SI
Writing the Reflection	GA	GA	GA
Test on Psychology Text	GA	GA	GA

GA = Graded Assignment
SI = Skill Involved

REFLECTING INTEGRATED ASSIGNMENTS IN COURSE GRADES

Descriptor 1 Assignments _____ % of _____ Grade

_____

a)

b)

c)

d)

Descriptor 2 Assignments _____ % of _____ Grade

_____

a)

b)

c)

d)

Descriptor 3 Assignments _____ % of _____ Grade

_____

a)

b)

c)

d)

Descriptor 4 Assignments _____ % of _____ Grade

_____

a)

b)

c)

d)

Descriptor 5 Assignments _____ % of _____ Grade

_____

a)

b)

c)

d)

INTEGRATED ASSIGNMENTS IN CLOUT

EMERGING ISSUE ASSIGNMENTS
Students researched the issue they identified in their service learning project and used their research to produce several products:

COM Information speech (15% of course grade)
Persuasive speech (20% of course grade)
ENG Argument paper (15% of course grade)
CRE Reading project (20% of course grade)

SMALL GROUP COMPONENT ASSIGNMENTS
Students fulfilled the majority of the small group communication component and summarized their experience orally and in written form:

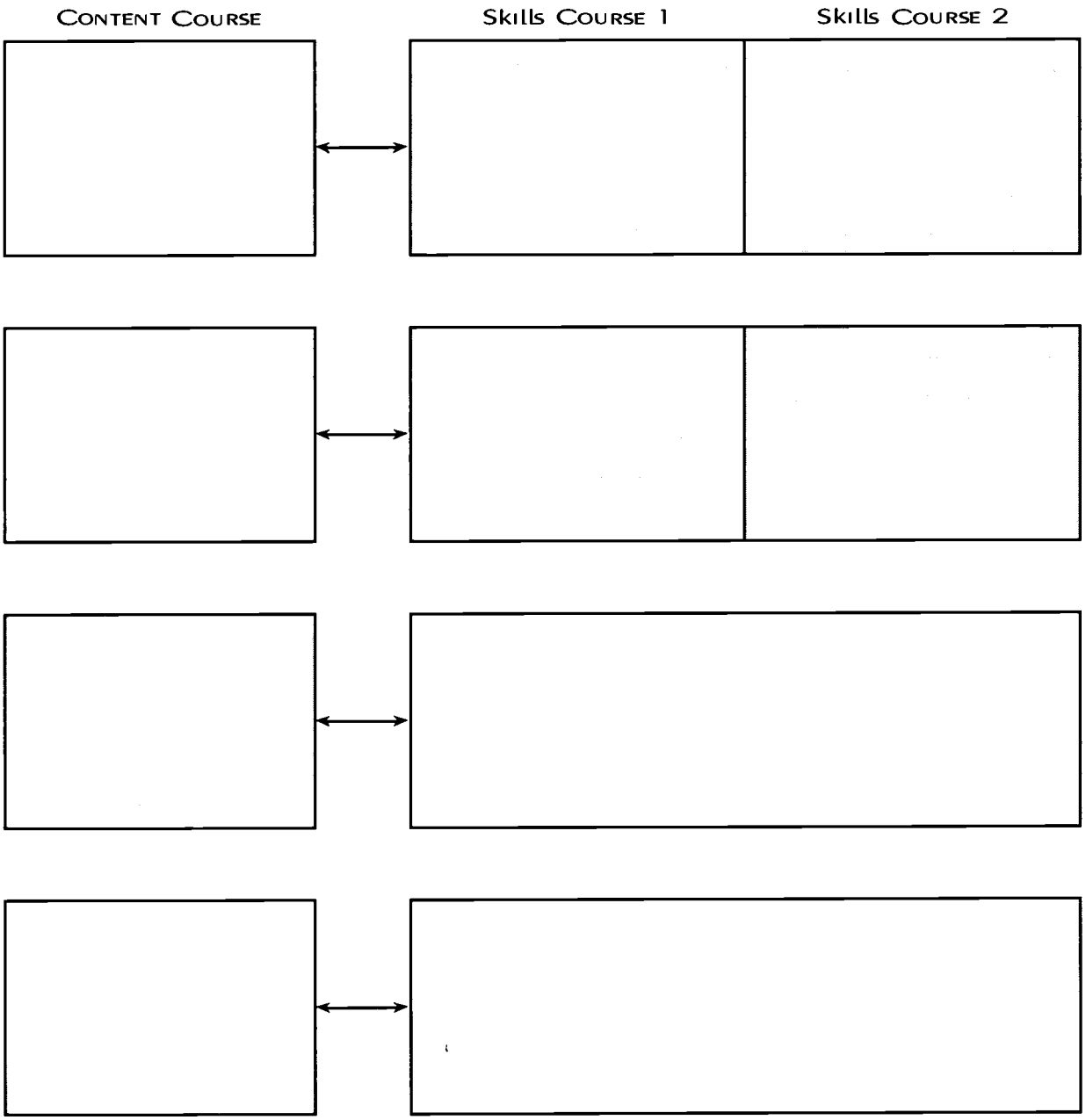
COM Service learning group report (10% of course grade)
Group presentation (10% of course grade)

REFLECTIVE ASSIGNMENTS
Student reflected individually and in groups about their experience:

ENG Reflective essay (10% of course grade)
COM Group presentation (same as that listed above)
Group analysis (10% of course grade)

IDENTIFYING COMPLEMENTARY RELATIONSHIPS

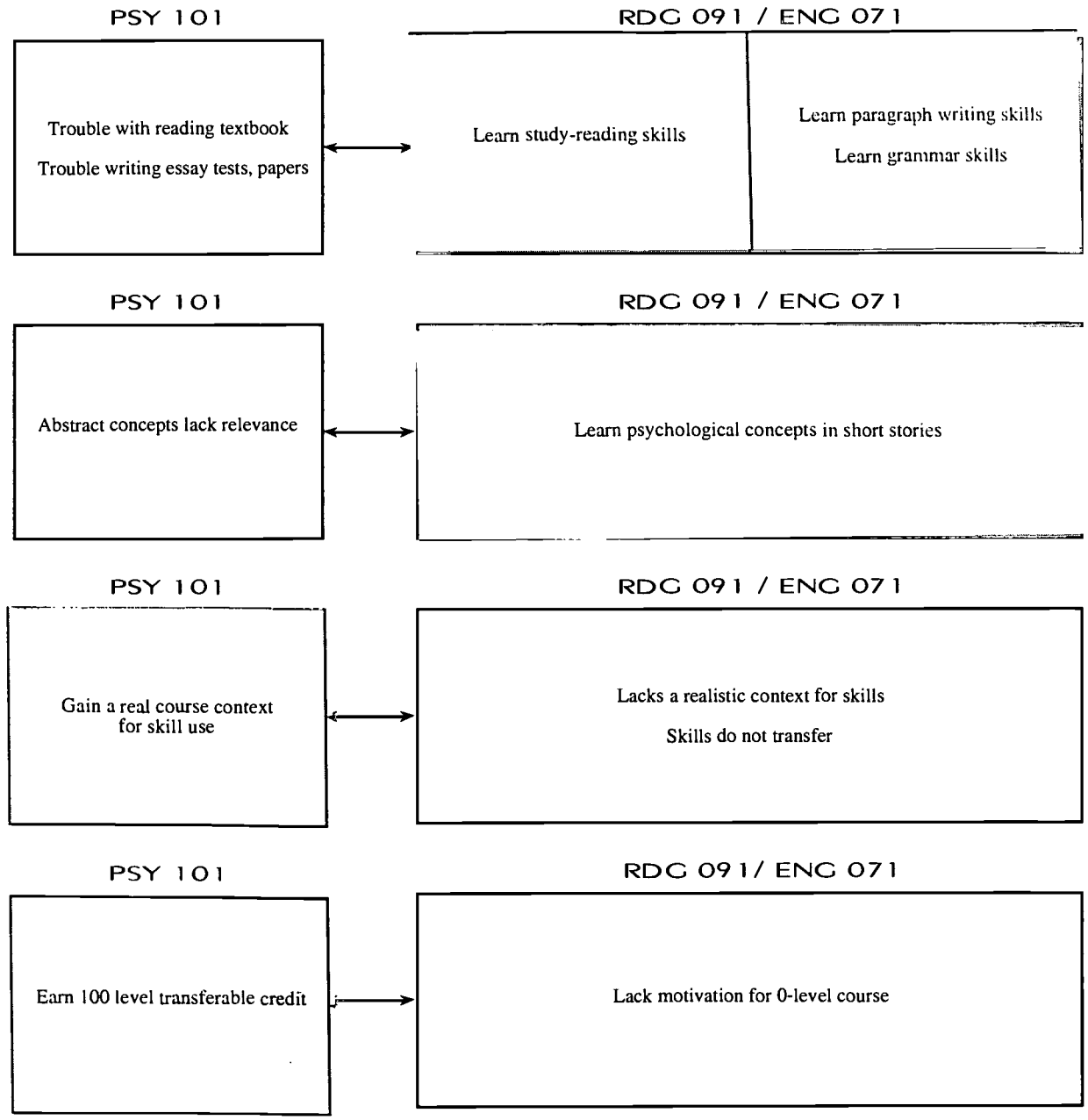
Clear boxes show weaknesses for students in courses
Shaded boxes show strengths for students in courses



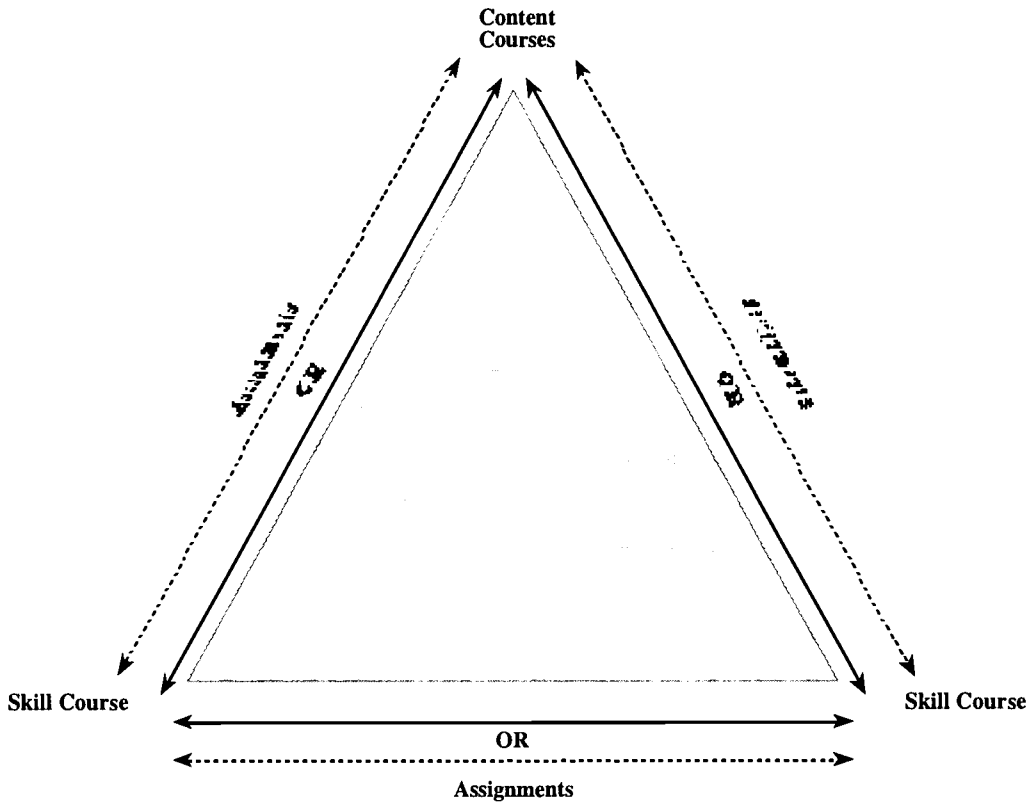
LINK

COMPLEMENTARY RELATIONSHIPS
CONTENT AND SKILLS COURSES

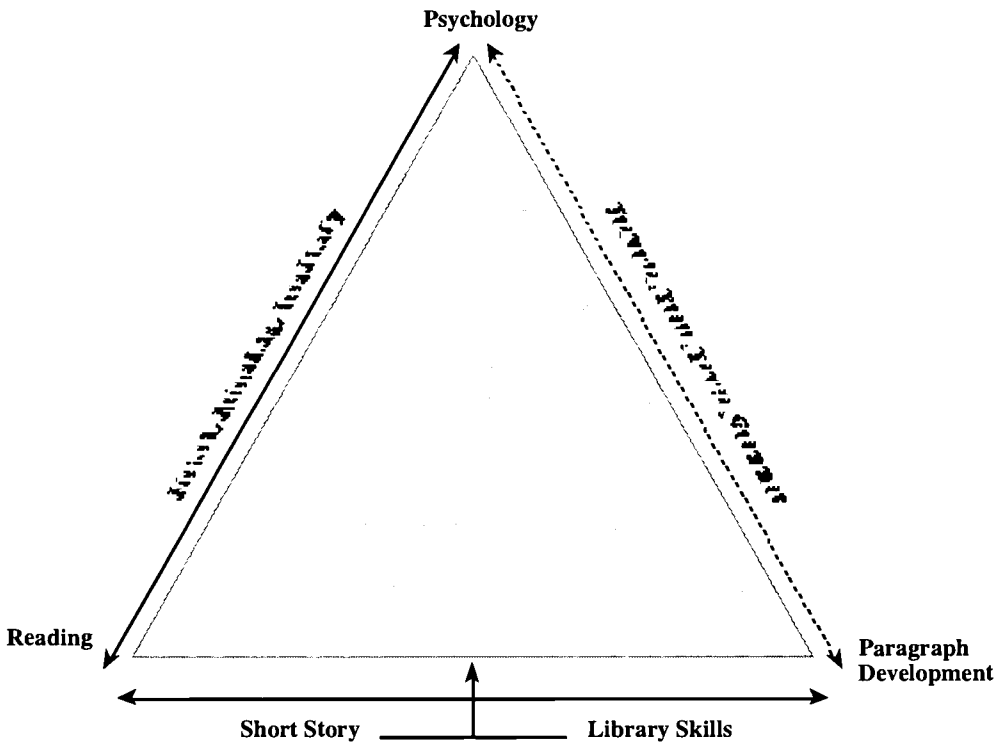
Clear boxes show weaknesses for students in courses
Shaded boxes show strengths for students in courses



COORDINATING OF CONTENT AND SKILL COURSE



LINK



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Learning Communities: Getting Started	
Author(s): Geri Rasmussen and Elizabeth Skinner	
Corporate Source: Maricop Center for Learning and Instruction	Publication Date: May 1997

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

XX

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, please

Signature: Geri Rasmussen	Printed Name/Position/Title: Geri Rasmussen, faculty
Organization/Address: GWCC/108 N 40th St Phoenix, AZ 85034-1795	Telephone: 602-392-5320 FAX: 602-392-5244
	E-Mail Address: rasmussen@gwc.maricopa.edu Date: 9/14/99

(over)